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Title: Need to include 'Dalit Christians' in the category of Scheduled Castes. − Laid.

SHRI L. RAJAGOPAL (VIJAYAWADA): Dalits practising Christianity faith are excluded from Scheduled Castes category and are treated as B.C. category only. If we look at the living conditions of all Dalit Christians, there is no difference in economic or social conditions when compared to other dalits. It is an irony that just by practising their faith of choice, excludes them from all the benefits that they originally enjoyed as dalits in a democratic and secular country like India. I have personally seen the living conditions of dalit Christians in various villages in my Parliamentary constituency and in spite of several years of Independence, they are still living in temporary hutments as daily wage farm labourers. The situation is such that unless both the wife and husband work they cannot meet the both ends and the earnings are just enough to feed their family with low nutrition food. Hence, I feel dalits who practise their own faith of worship which could include Christianity, Islam should also be treated as dalits with full benefits that come under Scheduled Castes category. However, in case the Government feels that by conversion the standard of living and social status of some dalits, has improved, then we could adopt a policy of giving the utmost priority to the economically and socially backward sections among the Scheduled Castes category. This would really help the needy among the downtrodden and achieve the objective of the Government.